

THE
GRAND IMPOSTOR

Caught in his own Snare :

OR,

The Providential Discovery

OF THE

Horrid Villany

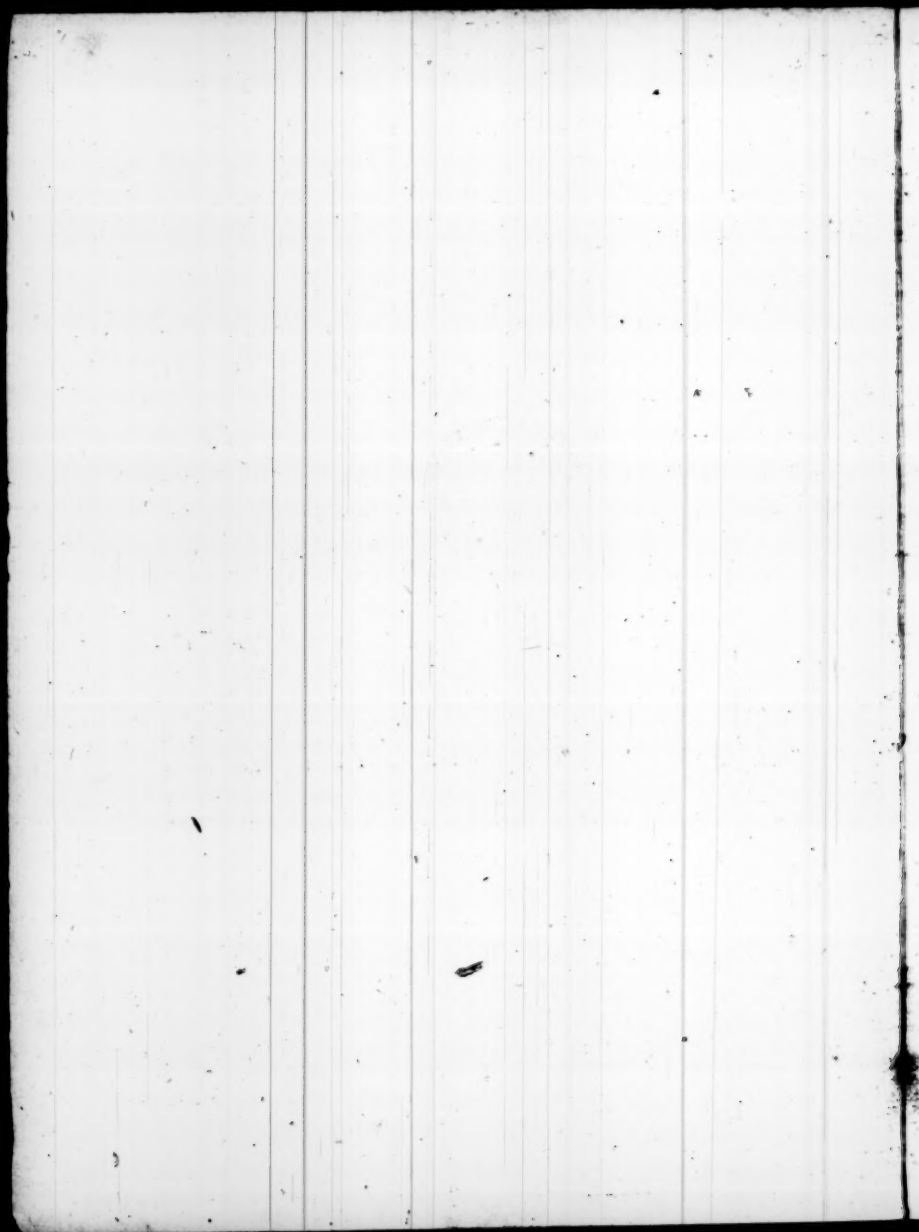
Lately contrived against

THOMAS GRANTHAM,

Preacher of Glad-Tidings to all Men in the
City of *Norwich*.



Printed for the Author, 1691.



THE GRAND IMPOSTOR

Caught in his own Snare, &c.

IT would fill too much Paper to describe all the Lies, Slanders and Forgeries invented and divulged by wicked Men (Professors and Prophane) against me, since I came to reside in this City, which is now about twelve Months, during which time the Devil hath rag'd against me like a roaring Lion, to the exposing my Reputation, and the hazard of my Life : In which Wickedness, one Mr. *Toathby* (once in Commission of the Peace, and then a great Persecutor of his Neighbours for Matters of Religion) and one Mr. *John Willet*, Rector of *Tattershall* (as he calls himself) in the County of *Lincoln*, have been the principal Instruments.

The first I have detected in Print already, and proved him a great Liar, by the Testimony of several credible Witnesses, who have by their Testimonials under their own Hands, attested my Innocency as to my Conversation in general, and particularly as to the Slander most wickedly reported by the said *Toathby*, who never durst appear to vindicate himself, nor can he do it, but must bear his Shame for ever.

After this comes a Priest to this City, under the Title of Mr. *John Willet*, and falling in company with some Professors of Mr. *Calvin's* Perswasion, and particularly one Mr. *Goward* (a School-master) in this City ; this miserable Priest perceiving (as himself confessed) that they had a Hatred against me, and hoping to get Money (as he also confessed) began to accuse me as a very great Criminal, for stealing of *Sheep* and some *Hurdles*, &c. This Story so pleased the said *Goward*,

that he became a great Friend to this wicked Priest, and waited upon him, and was his Counsellor (as appears by a Letter under the said *Goward's* own Hand). And now it was contrived that this Priest should go to some of the Ministers of the Church of *England*, and accuse me of these Crimes in their Presence, which accordingly he did, at the House of Dr. *Hillyard*, where were several other Ministers: but some of them observing that he was extravagant in his Speech, and inconsistent in his Story, demanded if he would give it under his Hand? who readily told them he would, and accordingly wrote, as followeth, most impudently.

T*His I do certify and affirm, That Thomas Grantham (a Taylor) did stand in the Pillory for two hours at Louth for causing his Man-Servant to fetch up seven Sheep of one of his Neighbours, and to brand them with his own Brand; and for causing him to fetch some Hurdles from one of his Neighbour's Hay-stacks. This I testify to be true.*

John Willet, late Rector of Tattershall.

One of the Ministers before whom this wicked Man did subscribe this horrible Slander, was pleased to give me very speedy notice of this Villany, (for which I am greatly obliged to him whilst I live) whereupon I immediately took out an Action against this Wretch, and sent a Serjeant to his Inn to apprehend him, but he was gone to take Boat for *Tarmouth*; I ordered a Friend, who was going thither at the same time in another Boat, to take care to apprehend this Priest there, which accordingly was done, and he was committed to Prison, where immediately his Conscience accused him, and wringing his Hands, he cried out, *He had done me wrong, and as God should judge his Soul, he had wronged me, and that he knew no Evil by me*; and said, *he was drawn to accuse me for a little Money and by their giving him too much Wine and Beer*: and there wrote this Confession following; which was read in the presence of divers Gentlemen and Officers there, viz.

Reverend

Reverend Sir,

“ **T** *Thomas Grantham*, your poor Prisoner humbly prayeth,
 “ and earnestly beggeth Pardon for the Injury and Wrong
 “ done unto you. I declare solemnly from the bottom of my
 “ Soul, that it shall always be my study day and night to make
 “ Reparation to the loss of your Credit that I have wrongfully
 “ blasted. I pray in the first place to God to forgive me; and
 “ in the next place, I pray heartily to my injured and offended
 “ Brother to forgive me, which upon my Knees I humbly
 “ beg, and I hope he will say as our Blessed Saviour said, *Go
 “ thy way, and sin no more.* I am willing to submit my Will to
 “ God and to my Adversary, whom I hope will in some
 “ measure take pity upon my sad and deplorable Condition,
 “ and remember our blessed Lord, and forgive me my Tresp-
 “ pass, as our Heavenly Father may forgive you at the last day.
 “ I must confess I have offended highly both to God and my
 “ Adversary; and though Wine and Ale did inflame me, I hope
 “ God will keep me in that due measure as never to be over-
 “ taken again. The best of God’s Saints have had their Fail-
 “ ings, and I hope and trust in God’s Mercy, that this will
 “ be a warning to me, and I may, with holy *David*, say, *It
 “ was good for me that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted, I
 “ went astray.* And now I have done it, all that I can do, is to
 “ be heartily sorry for what I have done, and in any thing
 “ shall be willing to submit my Will to my injured Friend,
 “ whom I am willing before my Adversary, or any of his
 “ Friends, to desire and beg his Pardon, which is all that I
 “ am able to do in this World; and hereafter all my study
 “ shall be to remember my Creator in the days of my Youth,
 “ and to do that Duty for the future that I am greatly in-
 “ debted to God and Man. I am poor, God knows, and to
 “ keep me here can do you no good, nor me, but me a great
 “ deal of hurt, both to my Health and wrong to my poor Soul,
 “ which I am sure all Ministers of God’s Word do not desire.
 “ This your poor Prisoner humbly begs you will speedily take
 “ into Consideration. *John Willer.*

Witnesses that this was owned by him as his own Act and Deed.

John Roper, Richard Angel, }
 Will. Mitchel, Will. Stennit. }

After.

After the Prisoner had made this Confession at *Tarmouth*, he was sent to *Norwich*, and brought before *Tho. Blofeld*, Esq; Mayor of the City, that he might answer for his Crimes in falsly accusing me, and basely excusing himself, by accusing these Reverend Gentlemen (the Ministers) for drawing him to so great a *Villany*; and now with crying and great Humility, he confessed his Wickedness, and that all was false which he had said and subscribed against me, and did over and over with crying, and bended Knees, and wringing of his Hands, pray me to forgive him. And he also confessed he had wronged the Gentlemen, the Ministers, who were there present, (and Dr. *Hillyard* who was absent) and begged their Pardon also, who severely rebuked him for his Iniquity: and indeed Mr. *Connould* and Mr. *Poke* did shew so much Justice and Sincerity in this matter, as will be an Honour to their Persons and Character.

The Worshipful Mr. *Mayor* having diligently heard the whole matter, did declare that it was the foulest thing that ever he heard, and said it was next to the taking my Life, and rebuked him for his Wickedness, which was such as deserved whipping; and said if I would forgive him, it was a very great Kindness to him; and commanded his Clerk to make a Record of his Confession, and ordered that Mr. *Willet* should sign and seal it, which accordingly was done, in manner and form following.

Norwich.

“ **W** Hereas I *John Willet*, late Rector of *Tattershall* in
 “ *Lincolnshire*, did on the second day of *Octob.* 1691,
 “ wickedly and falsly certify and subscribe, That *Thomas*
 “ *Grantham*, late of *Lincolnshire*, and now Inhabitant in the
 “ City of *Norwich*, did (to my knowledg) stand in the
 “ Pillory at *Louth* in *Lincolnshire*, two hours, for stealing Sheep
 “ and Hurdles, and that I did see him hold up his Hand at
 “ the Bar: and further I do declare, that I have not only
 “ wickedly abused the said *Thomas Grantham* in all these
 “ things, but falsly accused Dr. *Hillyard*, Mr. *John Connould*,
 “ and Mr. *Tho. Poke*, in saying at Great *Tarmouth*, that I
 “ was drawn to it by the foresaid Dr. *Hillyard*, Mr. *John*
Connould,

“ *Connould*, and *Mr. Poke*, by giving me too much Wine, and
 “ two Shillings in Mony. And I further do declare, that
 “ what I said of *Mr. Grantham*, and subscribed, was false,
 “ and from my self only, and that I drank but one Glass
 “ of Wine at the Doctor’s aforesaid: And I believe that the
 “ Doctor supposing I was in want, did out of his Christian
 “ Charity give me two Shillings. In witness whereof I
 “ have hereunto set my Hand and Seal before *Thomas*
 “ *Blofeld*, Esq; Mayor, the 6th day of October, Anno Do-
 “ mini 1691.

John Willet.

Sealed and subscribed before me,

THOMAS BLOFELD, Mayor.

This Paper the said *John Willet* delivered to me, and begged Pardon for his Offence, whereupon I did freely forgive him: He likewise delivered it to *Mr. Connould*, and *Mr. Poke*, and begged their Pardon, who also forgave him, and he promised he would never do so wickedly any more. Then the said *John Willet* was commanded by the Mayor, and required by the Ministers to get him out of the City, and not to stay in it, which he did with Shame and Confusion of Face, confessing his Wickedness to the last. This miserable Wretch had no Money to free himself from the Officer, he begged of me that I would not send him to Prison for Charges: I had Compassion on him, and gave the Officer 10 s. that he might be at liberty. The Mayor commands him to give me a Bill of his Hand to pay me this Money again, which he did, and promised to send it to me speedily; but if he do not, then he will appear the more wicked, as by how much I shewed him the greater Mercy.

In the next place, I think it convenient to give some account of *Mr. Goward* above-named, that all Men may the better take heed how they receive and encourage Men who walk with Slanders; and that the rigid *Calvinists* may beware how they set themselves against those who preach *God’s Love to Mankind*, for that is the bottom of the business (I fear) from whence this Envy flows out against me. For this *Goward’s* Mother I do understand

derstand to be a Member of the Independent Congregation in this City, (and himself a follower of them) and she applauded Mr. Willet for as good a Man as ever was heard, or to that purpose, (as a Friend of mine informed me) which shews he had some Society with some of that Perswasion; not that I do hereby accuse them all, but do in Charity believe they scorn so base an Enterprize as Goward engaged himself in. Yet I must needs say, that that unreasonable Opinion, *That God hated the greater part of Mankind before the World was made*, makes too many who adhere to it, very fierce and cruel against those that believe and teach the contrary, as I could shew by divers Papers now in my hands; and I fear that too many of them would have been glad if I had been expelled this City, tho I am so far from being their Enemy, that I heartily desire their good. But let us hear Mr. William Goward his unworthy Letter, viz.

Mr. Willet,

* This old Concern may in time prove a bad Concern to all that are concern'd in't.

I Am somewhat concerned to underst and the News which was brought to me since you left me, for you told me that night that there was some Persons to take you; but altho Incredulity then possesst me, yet since I found it true that there was some Persons to have taken you, but not upon your old Concern*, but it was upon the account of your Country-man Mr. Grantham. And indeed I am troubled to find you a Person so weak, as I since perceive; for I find you have given a Note under your Hand to Mr. Connould a Minister in the Close, concerning Mr. Grantham's Sheep and Hurdle-busines, and that he stood in the Pillory for the same. Now I say, if you are able to bring proof of this, then you did not so much amiss; but if you cannot do that, then he has an Action of Sefamation against you, which he has notwithstanding, and may lay you in Prison, till such time as you can get a Certificate out of the Court-Rolls where he was tried, which done, you are released, and may recover what Damage you please for a false Imprisonment. Now for my part I write to you as a Friend, therefore, if not taken, would have you to avoid the danger; for I am perswaded that they will take you if you continue, therefore would have you hasten away as soon as possible to Norwich, and stay at James Sherwood's the Wherry-man's House till such time as you can send to me, and I shall give

give you what Advice you can in it *. If you should be taken, * This is
 pray let me hear from you, and I will give you what Advice the Law not good
 can afford in that Point, if you state the thing truly to me. I sense, but
 am your Friend, it is so in
 the Letter.

Will. Goward.

Norwich, Octob. 3, 1691.

The Superscription was,

To Mr. Willet a Minister in Yarmouth; you may leave this
 at Mr. Alder. Fuller's House, if you cannot find him
 otherwise.

Now what shall we say to this Letter? Can it any way
 become a Christian, or an honest Man to endeavour the escape
 from Justice, of such a Person as he knew to have fled for fear
 of being apprehended, yea, and that after he knew the Crime
 for which he was pursued by me? Surely he who seeks to
 hide and encourage so great a Criminal, may be feared to
 have too great a share in the Wickedness it self which was
 designed against me. But seeing this Letter was read in pre-
 sence of the Mayor and Reverend Gentlemen above-named, and
 many others, and the Author examined upon it, whose Ex-
 cuses were of the same quality with his Letter, I shall at
 present make no further Observation upon it, not doubting
 but wise and good Men will easily perceive the peccant and
 nauseous Tendency of so vile a Scribble.

And now upon the whole matter, I do seriously propound
 this Question to all Calvinists in Norwich, or elsewhere,
 Whether they do or can believe, that our good and gracious God did
 from all Eternity, decree, freely and unchangeably, that Mr. Toath-
 by and Mr Willet (above-named) should come to Norwich, to
 slander and abuse me and others, as they have done, by those horrid
 Lies and Forgeries?

If they do believe this, then let all Men consider how vile
 an Opinion this is; if they do not believe it, (as I would hope
 they do not) then let them for ever explode and abhor that
 wretched Article of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster;

B

where

where they say, *God from all Eternity, did freely and unchangeably ordain WHATSOEVER COMES TO PASS.*

Finally, I do hereby solemnly admonish the inconsiderate Citizens of this City to repent and turn from their Iniquities, in making or loving Lies and Slanders ; for God hath determined that no such wicked Persons (persisting in their Sin) shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And that they may the better know their Sin, and repent before it be too late, I will here detect some more of the Slanders invented and promoted against me.

1. I have been confidently and impudently reported to be a Papist, yea, I hear some will not believe otherwise ; and yet it is certain, and they know it, that few Men in *England* have more opposed the Errors of the Papists than I have done (according to my Capacity) both by Disputation, and by printing about 3000 Books against their Errors, that if by any means I might be instrumental to help any of them to see their Mistakes, and to strengthen such as know the Truth, against the Errors of that People.

2. I have been reported to be a great Drunkard ; whereas I think I may safely say, there are few Men living upon the Earth, that are so free from that Sin, as by the Grace of God I have been during my whole Life to this day.

3. It has been impudently reported that I am a Whoremonger ; a Sin which by God's Grace I have always hated as the vilest of Sins : and as I have been the Husband of one Wife ; so now, upon this occasion, I do solemnly protest in the presence of *Almighty God, the elect Angels, and Men, That I never knew Woman but my own Wife.* And I do here summon all my Slanderers in this, or any *Criminal Act whatsoever*, to answer me at that dreadful Tribunal of Jesus Christ, where they are sure to be condemned, except they repent.

And now let our Gracious God be glorified for all his Favours bestowed upon us, and upon me his poor Servant, and particularly for this singular Act of his Gracious Providence ; and let my Enemies learn to fear that God who beholds their most secret Contrivances, whilst I conclude this short Account with the words of the Psalmist (as suitable to my case.)

Psalm

Psalm 64.

Hear my Voice, O God, in my Prayer, preserve my Life from fear of the Enemy.

Hide me from the secret Counsel of the wicked; from the Insurrection of the Workers of Iniquity:

Who whet their Tongue like a Sword, and bend their Bows to shoot their Arrows, even bitter Words.

That they may shoot in secret at the upright: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying Snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

They search out Iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the Heart is deep.

But God shall shoot at them with an Arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded.

So they shall make their own Tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them, shall flee away.

And all Men shall fear, and shall declare the Work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

The Righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and all the upright in Heart shall glory.

Norwich, Octob. 13, 1691.

THO. GRANTHAM.